

# Word war

Residents, employees,  
take sides in fight  
between town manager  
and selectman

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The feud between Town Manager Richard MacDonald and Selectman Chris Donato heated up Monday night, as supporters of MacDonald appeared, responding to what they considered to be attacks on him.

On Sunday, Donato sent a series of e-mail questions to MacDonald, asking for information on a number of topics. Copies of the e-mails were sent to other board members and the press.

The four e-mails asked MacDonald to explain his absence from the board's Oct. 14 meeting, the alleged removal of police personnel files that were then delivered to his office, his alleged failure to do evaluations of employees and an allegation that MacDonald recently did an investigation of a town employee without notifying the board of selectmen.

Monday night, Recreation Director Gordon Cushing read a letter he said was signed by 20 town employees in support of MacDonald.

The letter calls MacDonald "a valuable asset for the town of Duxbury...who has always placed the best interest (of Duxbury) first and foremost."

The letter went on to state that while "public discourse...can be healthy," it is important for residents to "know that Mr. MacDonald and his management practices are looked favorably upon by many people who work for him."

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# E-mails cause stir at town hall

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Spectator in the audience applauded after Cushing read the letter.

After Cushing read the letter, Donato asked if the signatures were collected during business hours, stating that he was contacted by town employees who said they were. After Cushing said they were not, Donato expressed his skepticism and asked MacDonald to look into the matter. A request that elicited laughter in the room. Donato responded to the laughter by expressing his fear that some town employees may have felt coerced into signing the letter. "If you're not on the list, you're on the hit list," he said.

A resident, reading a prepared statement, called upon Donato to "act in a civil and respectful manner," to which Donato replied that "when all the facts are out, you'll have a different opinion."

Two critics of Donato brought the selectman's family into the argument, with resident Tom Garafolo asking if it was true that a police officer picked up Donato's daughter from school. Donato said that Lt. Lewis Chubb offered to have her picked up by an officer working a detail near the school. When his wife, who was then a police department employee, was working at the station late. According to Donato, she expressed concern about the offer, but was assured it was "common practice." However, Donato's child refused the ride since she did not recognize the officer. "This is how this whole thing plays out," said Donato, the charge of favoritism was "Brought out so he can't vote on issues related to the chief."

Resident John Britten stated, "Mr. Donato ran to protect his wife's boss," and called upon him to resign.

MacDonald broke his silence, to some extent, reading a statement that began "I have been criticized for remaining silent about the reasons behind some recent decisions that I have had to make. I have done this to protect the community from the mud-slinging that can occur when personnel matters become public." Everybody in this room, elected or appointed, has a responsibility to look out for the well-being of the residents of this community. Negative attacking statements made to the press, and in public forums, are harmful to our citizens. I have avoided making these kinds of statements, and will continue to do so."

In the statement, which was distributed to the press, MacDonald goes on to defend the management team he has hired and warns that the continued negativity could effect town services, property values and make it hard to hire qualified personnel.

Donato also posted the e-mails on the Duxbury School Forum Internet discussion group, writing "I promised to bring transparency to the office of board of selectmen. Time and again, I have attempted to shine a light on much of the back-door dealings going on in our town government."

In the e-mails, Donato wrote that the alleged removal of the files was "reckless" and notes they may contain sensitive information. "If you, your staff, and whoever else may have come in contact with these files are not CORI certified, you are in violation of the Massachusetts CORI laws," he writes.

"What benefit could you gain from removing the personnel files from their secured location at the police station and having them delivered to your office?"

According to the e-mails, MacDonald initiated an investigation of a town employee on Oct. 3. Further, Donato alleges that a

special counsel was hired to administer oaths and take testimony.

After listing pertinent sections of the town manager act, Donato states that MacDonald did not inform selectmen of his investigation, which was not authorized, he writes, by the board. He also notes that, according to the town manager act, a report on any such investigation must be filed with the town clerk. According to town clerk Nancy Oates, no such report has been filed with her office, and none have been during the time the town manager act has been in effect.

"How much did this unauthorized investigation cost? How much did the special counsel cost? How are you going to pay for these expenses when they were not authorized by the Town?" wrote Donato.

In another e-mail, Donato notes that MacDonald is personally responsible for conducting annual performance evaluations for 15 town employees. According to Donato, a number of those people said they haven't been evaluated in three years. Donato writes that this is "in direct violation of the Town Manager's Act, the Personnel Plan and the individual contracts of our town's contract employees."

Donato, in his e-mail, quotes MacDonald as stating, at the board's Sept. 28 meeting, that the evaluation for Police Chief Mark DeLuca was not performed due to negotiations with various bargaining units.

At press time, MacDonald was unavailable for comment on the allegations made in Donato's letters.

Read the letters from Selectman Chris Donato and from the town employees at [www.wickedlocalduxbury.com](http://www.wickedlocalduxbury.com)